

6. (Twice Amended) A method of processing roasted coffee to improve the retention of carbon dioxide and aromatics liberated from the roasted coffee, the method comprising the steps of:

- (i) preparing one or more containers for receiving coffee therein;
- (ii) purging said containers of contained air through flushing said containers with an inert gas;
- (iii) transporting and delivering roasted coffee to a grinding circuit;
- (iv) grinding said roasted coffee directly into a container filling apparatus;
- (v) with said container filling apparatus, delivering said ground coffee directly into said purged containers; and,
- (vi) sealing said containers to maximize the retention of carbon dioxide and aromatics liberated from said roasted coffee and to minimize contact of said ground roasted coffee with the air,

wherein said step of grinding said roasted coffee directly into a container filling apparatus is carried out within a modified oxygen depleted atmosphere and said steps of grinding said roasted coffee directly into a container filling apparatus and delivering said ground coffee directly into said purged containers are completed with minimal delay between successive steps to minimize the loss of carbon dioxide gas liberated from said coffee and to minimize the degassification of said coffee prior to the sealing of said coffee within said containers.

16. (Twice Amended) A method of processing roasted coffee beans to minimize the loss

of carbon dioxide and aromatics liberated from the coffee beans following roasting, the method comprising the steps of preparing one or more containers for receiving roasted coffee beans therein, purging said containers of contained air through flushing with an inert gas and thereafter maintaining said purged containers in a generally upright position with said inert gas retained therein to prevent the influx of air into said purged containers, without delay and without allowing said roasted coffee beans to accumulate in storage bins or staging areas transporting and delivering said roasted coffee beans directly to a container filling apparatus, with said container filling apparatus delivering said roasted coffee beans directly into said purged containers, and, thereafter, sealing said containers to maximize the retention of carbon dioxide and aromatics liberated from said roasted coffee beans and to minimize contact of said roasted coffee beans with the air, said step of transporting roasted coffee beans to said container filling apparatus comprising transportation of said roasted coffee beans directly from a roasting circuit with minimal delay and minimal degasification, said coffee beans transported in an oxygen depleted environment, said step of delivering said roasted coffee beans directly into said purged containers with said container filling apparatus carried out within a modified oxygen depleted atmosphere.

18. (Twice Amended) A method of processing roasted coffee to minimize the loss of carbon dioxide gas and aromatics liberated from the coffee, the method comprising the steps of preparing one or more containers for receiving roasted coffee therein and maintaining said purged containers in a generally upright position, transporting and delivering roasted coffee to a grinding circuit located within an enclosure having an oxygen depleted atmosphere, grinding said coffee directly into a container filling apparatus, with said container filling apparatus delivering said ground coffee directly into said purged containers, sealing said containers to maximize the

retention of carbon dioxide and aromatics liberated from said roasted coffee and to minimize the contact of said roasted coffee with the air, said steps of said method completed with minimal delay between successive steps to minimize the loss of carbon dioxide gas liberated from said coffee and to minimize the degassification of said coffee prior to the sealing of said coffee within said containers, said step of grinding said roasted coffee directly into a container filling apparatus carried out within a modified oxygen depleted atmosphere.

REMARKS

By the subject Amendment, Applicants have canceled Claim 2 and amended Claims 3, 5, 6, 16 and 18. Claims 3 to 12 and 14 to 20 are presently pending. Claims 6, 16 and 18 are presented in independent form.

In the Official Action dated June 30, 2003, the Examiner determined that Claim 6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims. Applicants have so rewritten Claim 6. It should be noted that Claim 6 prior to the subject amendment, depended directly from Claim 6, i.e., there are no intervening claims.

Claims 3 to 5 and 7 to 12 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 6 and therefore are allowable for similar reasons. It should be noted that dependent Claims 3 to 5 and 7 to 12 recite additional limitations that further define Applicants' invention from the prior art of record.

Claims 16 and 18, the only other independent claims, have each been amended to recite "said step of delivering said roasted coffee beans directly into said purged containers with said filling apparatus carried out within a modified oxygen depleted atmosphere." A similar but not